



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
2000 NAVY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-2000

IN REPLY REFER TO

1730
Ser N097/02439
17 Dec 02

Dear Colleagues,

I spent the better part of two days last week at the Hilton Mark Center Hotel in Alexandria, Virginia. I was there at the invitation of our ecclesiastical endorsing agents, participating in the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF). Each year, the Chiefs of Chaplains from the three services (with members of our staffs) meet with the endorsers to report on the state of religious ministry in the military.

This annual gathering is a rich tapestry of religious traditions, a microcosm of the American religious experience. Their theme this year, "Many Voices-One Calling," reflected their awareness of a remarkable paradox. The "One Calling" proclaimed the unity all of us involved in military ministry have achieved through our commitment to meeting the spiritual needs of our service personnel. At the same time, the "Many Voices" acknowledged belief and practice differences and our respect for each other's right to believe or do as conscience directs.

The conference is both a graduate reunion and a new member orientation. Each year, we enjoy fellowship with old friends, for many of our endorsers have "graduated" from long and illustrious careers in the Navy Chaplain Corps into the role of talent scout, mentor and advocate. And each year, new faces appear in the group. Some of these are life-long civilians, new to the bewildering world of military uniforms, customs, and terms. Increasingly, the newcomers represent new endorsing bodies, and come to learn in this gathering, as many of us did in the Basic Course, that we can actually work and live with people we would not have known (or perhaps even spoken to) apart from our military ministry involvement.

Like the teacher at a school Parents' Night, I was proud to tell them about all the wonderful things you're doing. Their concern for you was clear; their support is strong. Our endorsers play a vital role in keeping us connected to the faith communities we represent. Please keep yourself connected to them through regular communication. Wherever you are today-whatever the

constraints under which you minister—you are not alone. Your endorsing agent is just one more of "that great cloud of witnesses" undergirding you in prayer and celebrating what God is doing through you. I give thanks for them and for you, and for the impact God is having in the lives of our spiritual charges through all of us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Barry C. Black". The signature is fluid and elegant, with the first name "Barry" and last name "Black" clearly distinguishable.

BARRY C. BLACK
Rear Admiral, Chaplain Corps
U. S. Navy
Chief of Navy Chaplains